of all the destroyers which could be spared from service with the Fleet, and of all that the Americans could furnish, in the task of escorting our shipping convoys, a great deal of the work of watching over the safety of our merchantmen was carried out by armed trawlers. It is repeatedly stated by apologists for the Admiralty that although convoys were successful when they were eventually introduced, this was only because the advent of America had given us a supply of T.B.D/s for escort work- m But it must be borne in mind that the first successful line of regular convoys—those organised for the French coal trade by Commander Henderson—made no use of T.B.D.'s at all. Some of the convoys went without added guard, their strength being their mutual support, manoeuvring in rough formation along a specially appointed route. Mostly, however, they were escorted by armed trawlers, of which Commander Henderson had altogether some 26 available for protecting the three main routes followed by his coal vessels. The " Official History " remarks that: " the exceptional immunity that the French coal trade enjoyed since it had been placed under this modified system of convoy was certainly remarkable. During the quarter ending April, 1917, rather fewer than 30 armed trawlers had given protection to over 4,000 cross-Channel voyages."

It cannot be doubted in the face of these

experiences that an earlier and fuller use of our armed trawlers in escort work for convoyed vessels would have saved us a very considerable volume of the tonnage which went to the bottom of the sea in 1916 and the earlier part of 1917, before systematic convoys were instituted, or the American Navy became a contributor to our protective forces upon the sea.